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## SOME WAR LETTERS.

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### I.

THE following letter from Secretary Chase is the one referred to by me in the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW of November last :

“WASHINGTON, October 13, 1861.

“MY DEAR GENERAL: Your telegram asking an ‘assurance that ample supply of money and aid be given,’ etc., was received a few moments ago, and my answer, that ‘to the extent of means in the Treasury all requisitions for your command will be promptly answered,’ is already on its way to you.

“I wish I could have said absolutely that all requisitions for your troops will be immediately responded to. It will not be my fault if they are not. I know the great importance of the work confided to you, and want to render you every aid in my power. To a considerable extent I shall feel warranted in paying preference to requisitions from you.

“But there is a limit to possibilities. The country has responded nobly to my call for means ; but after all experience shows that about a million a day is all that we can hope to realize from home resources, and it is vain to look abroad until some decisive success shall have satisfied European capitalists, small as well as great, that the cause of the Union will triumph, and that at no very distant day.

“For the last six weeks requisitions have largely exceeded even the great sum of a *million a day*—so largely that the unpaid requisitions for which no present funds are or can be provided exceed twenty millions.

“While these circumstances impose on me the disagreeable necessity of discrimination, they imperiously require of all commanding generals to observe closely the expenditures in their several departments ; to scan the profits of contractors ; to insist on durable articles for clothing and transportation, as well as suitable and healthful food, and to guard as far as practicable against waste as well as imposition. Quartermasters and commissaries, as well as contractors, will bear watching.

“It is my belief that had due economy and vigilance been exercised from the first, there would have been now no excess of requisitions beyond means, while the army would have been vastly better armed, clothed, and equipped than now.

“Pardon these suggestions and observations. They are, perhaps, idle so far as you are concerned. But, as even ‘Homer sometimes nodded,’ you, who have so much ability and so much honorable zeal for the purity, as well as efficiency, of the service, may sometimes relax your vigilance, or be tempted to extravagance. If, from what I have said, an effective caution against both is derived, you will not regret it.

"Believe me, with most earnest desires for your success, and for your distinction.  
Your friend, S. P. CHASE."

"P. S.—May I add, do not over-estimate your enemy's force so much as to delay greatly your aggressive movements. In my judgment, we have lost much in this way."

## II.

Admiral Porter's pointed and graphic description of the capture of Fort Fisher, and the cutting up of his 1,500 sailors, is an illustration of what sailors and marines could do when put to it on land. When the war broke out, our naval tubs could hardly float. Before its close there were armored ships and naval heroes in every harbor of the Southern coast, and when fighting opportunities failed on the water, the sailors were ready to lend a hand on shore.

"NORTH ATLANTIC SQUADRON, }  
"Flagship 'Malvern,' }  
"Off FORT FISHER, *January 17, 1865.* }

"DEAR GENERAL: I send you some information from General Palmer. I have sent to Newbern letters sent by the Secretary of War to obtain more information, and will send it down to you as fast as it comes. We have taken Fort Fisher and all the outworks. The assault lasted seven hours. I had 1,500 sailors in the assault; they got badly cut up. The enemy had 2,300 men in the works. We assaulted with 5,000, including sailors and marines. The sailors made the first assault on the sea front; the rebels mistook them for regulars, opposed them with their whole force; of course there was great slaughter; the rebels gave three cheers thinking they had whipped our army off, at which moment they received a volley in their backs from our soldiers who were coming over the parapet on the other side. The rebels then brought all the force to bear on them, but our troops had gained a pretty secure footing on the parapet between the traverses, which are tremendous bomb proofs; then the hardest fight took place for seven hours that you ever saw. The old frigate 'Ironsides,' laying close to, would clean out with her guns between the traverses. It began to get dark when we got in re-enforcements and spades. The men went to digging. The enemy tried to get re-enforcements in, and landed them on Federal point, but the fire of the ships was so heavy in that direction that they could not advance. Thus our troops fought from traverse to traverse all through the works, for about one mile, when the rebels all run for the point of land, and, not being able to escape, gave themselves up, amounting to 1,800 or 1,900 men and officers. Gen. Whiting, Col. Lamb, and Gen. Colgate were among the prisoners, and some navy men.

"Last night they blew up Fort Caswell, and all the outworks and batteries on Smith's Island are destroyed. Our gunboats are now in Cape Fear River, and Wilmington is hermetically sealed against blockade runners. I shall make them believe we are going to attack that place, and make them draw all the forces there they can. We haven't force enough here to do any more than that, and now this leaves me plenty of gunboats to communicate with you along the coast. I have made arrangements at Beaufort, N. C., to supply you with ammunition, and can give you plenty of 12 or 24 pdr. howitzer ammunition, or guns if you want them.

"If you will let me know by bearer, or any vessel coming up, what points you will touch at or about, I will be looking out for you. The best plan will be to send provisions in light-draft steamers, 10 feet, and let them rendezvous here in Cape Fear River, where I have a fine harbor.

"Now, good-bye, my dear General. I hope we will soon shake hands in Wilmington. The door through which the enemy was fed is closed on them, and all we have got to do is to watch them starve.

"Yours very truly and sincerely,

"DAVID D. PORTER, *Rear Admiral.*

"MAJ.-GEN. W. T. SHERMAN, Com'dg, etc., Savannah."

### III.

Here is a note from Grant just before the battle of Chattanooga. Telegrams from Washington had come urging haste, or Burnside at Knoxville would be lost. Two of Sherman's divisions, spite of hard marching and superhuman effort, were not quite up. The reply from Sherman is characteristic of the man. The move took place at midnight, almost at the minute set in the reply.

"HEADQUARTERS MIL. DIV. OF THE MISSISSIPPI,

"CHATTANOOGA, Tenn., November 22, 1863.

"MAJ.-GEN. W. T. SHERMAN, Commanding Army of the Tenn.:

"GENERAL: Owing to the late hour when Ewing will get up, if he gets up at all to-night, and the entire impossibility of Woods reaching in time to participate to-morrow, I have directed Thomas that we will delay yet another day.

"Let me know to-morrow, at as early an hour as you can, if you will be entirely ready for Tuesday morning. I would prefer Woods should be up to cross with the balance of your command, but if he can be up in time to cross as soon as your pontoons are laid, I would prefer you should commence without him to delaying another day.

"Very respectfully,

"U. S. GRANT, *Maj.-Gen.*"

### The Reply.

"HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE TENNESSEE,

"CAMP OPPOSITE CHICKAMAUGA, November 23, 1863.

"MAJ.-GEN. U. S. GRANT, Chattanooga:

"DEAR GENERAL: I received your letter at the hands of Capt. Audenried, and immediately made the orders for the delay of 24 hours. I need not express how I felt, that my troops should cause delay, but I know Woods must have some cause else he would not delay. Whitaker's and Crafts's troops fill the road, doubtless, and it must be a ditch full of big rocks. But Ewing is up, and, if possible, Woods or Osterhaus (for I got an orderly in the night announcing that he had overtaken, and would resume command to-day) will be also. But in any event we will move at midnight, and I will try the Missionary Ridge to-morrow morning November 24th, in the manner prescribed in my memorandum order for to-day.

"I will use the 2d division, in place of the 1st, as guide, and Jeff. C. Davis's division will act as reserve, and bring me forward the artillery as soon as the bridge is put down. I will try and get out at least six guns in the first dash for the hills.

"As you ask for positive information, I answer, no cause on earth shall induce me to ask for longer delay, and to-night at midnight we move.

"What delays may occur in the pontoons I cannot foretell. I will get Jeff. C. Davis to make some appearances opposite Harrison, to make believe our troops are moving past Bragg to interpose between him and Longstreet.

"Every military reason now sanctions a general attack. Longstreet is absent, and we expect no more re-enforcements, therefore we should not delay *another hour*, and should put all our strength in the attack. Yours truly,

"W. T. SHERMAN, *Major-Gen.*"

#### IV.

Here is a letter bearing on the attack at Chickasaw, but Mr. Blair, unlike General Grant, has not seen the ground, and mistakes the real reason for the failure :

"CAMP BEFORE VICKSBURG, *February 3, 1863.*

"MAJ.-GEN. W. T. SHERMAN :

"GENERAL :

\* \* \* \* \*

"While I admire your generosity in *assuming* the *responsibility* of the failure at Chickasaw Bayou, I must say that I do not regard it as just to yourself or friends that the blunders committed by inferior officers in the execution of your orders, and which were the direct cause of our repulse, should be laid to your charge or assumed by you.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Yours respectfully,

"FRANK P. BLAIR, *Brig.-Gen. Vols.*"

Here is a note of interest from the point of Grant's first victory :

"HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT WEST TENNESSEE,

"FORT DONELSON, *February 21, 1862.*

"GEN. W. T. SHERMAN, Commanding Department of Cairo, Paducah, Ill. :

"GENERAL : I am sending off the sick and wounded as rapidly as possible, and commenced doing so immediately after the battle. Owing, however, to the continuous wet and cold weather we are much retarded in the operation.

"I want to see as few citizens here as possible. They embarrass us very much. Ladies are still worse than men, and particularly if they are the wives of officers. I would esteem it a special favor if you would allow no officers' wives to come up except where the officers are wounded.

"I am at a loss to know what the next move is going to be. Yesterday I was in Clarksville, and expected by to-morrow week to be in Nashville. General Halleck's telegram indicates a different move. We want no more surgeons here.

"I am, General, very respectfully your obedient servant,

"U. S. GRANT, *Brig.-Gen.*"

There were few soldiers at Vicksburg in July of 1863 who did not readily see that Sherman's first attack from Chickasaw Bluffs, though positively ordered by Grant, was a loyal effort to do the

impossible. That General Grant thought so too, afterwards, is shown by the following note to the President :

"HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE TENNESSEE,

"VICKSBURG, Miss., *July 22, 1863.*

"HIS EXCELLENCY A. LINCOLN, President of the United States :

"SIR :

\* \* \* \* \*

"General Sherman's management as commander of troops in the attack on Chickasaw Bluffs last December was admirable. Seeing the ground from the opposite side of the attack, I see the impossibility of making it successful. The conception of the attack on Arkansas Post was General Sherman's. His part of the execution no one denies was as good as it possibly could have been. His demonstration on Haine's Bluffs in April to hold the enemy about Vicksburg, whilst the army was securing a foothold east of the Mississippi, his rapid marches to join the army afterwards, his management at Jackson, Miss., in the first attack, his almost unequalled march from Jackson to Bridgeport and passage of that stream, his securing Walnut Hills on the 18th of May, and thus opening communication with our supplies, all attest his great merit as a soldier.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Your obedient servant,

"U. S. GRANT, *Maj.-Gen., U. S. A.*"

## V.

General Grant's confidence that he had Lee as in a vise is shown by his note to Sherman, even before the last avenues of escape were closed :

"HEADQUARTERS ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES,

"CITY POINT, Va., *March 16, 1865.*

"MAJ.-GEN. W. T. SHERMAN, Command'g Mil. Div. of the Miss. :

"GENERAL :

\* \* \* \* \*

"The determination seems to be to hold Richmond as long as possible. I have a force sufficient to leave enough to hold our lines (all that is necessary of them), and move out with a plenty to whip his whole army. But the roads are entirely impassable. Until they improve I shall content myself with watching Lee, and be prepared to pitch into him if he attempts to evacuate the place. I may bring Sheridan over—think I will—and break up the Danville and South Side Railroads. These are the last avenues left to the enemy.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

"U. S. GRANT, *Lieut.-Gen.*"

## VI.

General Grant's interest in the colored troops is evidenced by his choice of a commander at Vicksburg.

"HEADQUARTERS ARMIES OF THE U. S.,

"WASHINGTON, D. C., *April 4, 1864.*

"MAJ.-GEN. W. T. SHERMAN, Commanding Mil. Div. of the Miss. :

"GENERAL :

\* \* \* \* \*

"I suggested Slocum to command the district of Vicksburg, because there is

such a large proportion of colored troops in that district (more will be constantly organized) and Slocum will take an active *interest* in this work which the President and Secretary of War fear Newton will not. I do not join in this fear, but have not had the opportunity of having General Newton's views on the subject. He is evidently a soldier, and a soldier does not consult his own views of policy when orders from his superiors intervene.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I am, General, very respectfully your obedient servant,

"U. S. GRANT, *Lieut.-Gen.*"

## VII.

The *real purpose* of Banks's campaign against Texas is shown in this note from General Halleck to General Grant. Whether good, in any sense, came of the politico-military fiasco is more than ever a matter of doubt.

"HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY,

"WASHINGTON, D. C., *January 8, 1864.*

"MAJOR-GENERAL U. S. GRANT, Comd'g, etc., etc., Chattanooga, Tenn.:

"GENERAL:

\* \* \* \* \*

"In regard to General Banks's campaign against Texas, it is proper to remark that it was undertaken less for military reasons than as a matter of *state policy*. As a military measure only, it perhaps presented less advantages than a movement on Mobile and the Alabama River, so as to threaten the enemy's interior lines and effect a diversion in favor of our armies at Chattanooga and in East Tennessee. But, however this may have been, it was deemed necessary as a matter of political or state policy, connected with our foreign relations, and especially with France and Mexico, that our troops should occupy and hold at least a portion of Texas. The President so ordered, for reasons satisfactory to himself and his Cabinet, and it was therefore unnecessary for us to inquire whether or not the troops could have been better employed elsewhere.

"I allude to this matter here as it may have an important influence on your projected operations during the present winter.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Very respectfully your obedient servant,

"H. W. HALLECK, *Gen.-in-Chief.*"

## VIII.

The supersedure of General Rosecrans at Chattanooga by Thomas was left *optional* with General Grant, as is shown by the following from Halleck:

"HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY,

"WASHINGTON, D. C., *October 16, 1863.*

"MAJ.-GEN. U. S. GRANT, Louisville:

"GENERAL: You will receive herewith the orders of the President of the United States, placing you in command of the Departments of the Ohio, Cumberland and Tennessee. The organization of these Departments will be changed as you may deem most practicable. You will immediately proceed to Chattanooga

and relieve General Rosecrans. You can communicate with Generals Burnside and Sherman by telegraph. A summary of the orders sent to these officers will be sent to you immediately. It is left *optional* with you to supersede General Rosecrans by Gen. G. H. Thomas or not. Any other changes will be made on your request by telegram.

"One of the first objects requiring your attention is the supply of your armies. Another is the security of the progress in the Georgia mountains to shut out the enemy from Tennessee and Kentucky. You will consult with General Meigs and Colonel Scott in regard to transportation and supplies.

"Should circumstances permit I will visit you personally in a few days for consultation.

"H. W. HALLECK, *Gen.-in-Chief*."

These war letters will be continued. The next series will embrace letters from Grant, Sherman, Garfield, Thomas, Admiral Porter, Governor Tod, and others.

S. H. M. BYERS.